This is important in persuasive papers because it:

1. shows that you are aware of the “other side,”
2. balances your argument, and
3. allows you to refute, attack, suggest other options, etc.

For example, if you write a paper opposing smoking…

I. Intro

II. Body

A. Health risks

B. Money / Cost

C. Rights of other people

D. Refutation paragraph

III. Conclusion

IV. References

You could refutations such as these:

Example A (attack)

Yes, smoking is a personal choice, but all too often smokers don’t respect the rights of non-smokers. We all breathe the same air, but if a smoker fills that air with smoke then the non-smoker has no choice but to breathe it, too—in other words, in addition to the health risk, the smoker is forcing the non-smoker to breathe smoky air or move elsewhere.

Example B (suggestion)

Of course, tobacco farmers depend on the sale of their crop, tobacco. Tobacco is, however, just one crop among many—perhaps such farmers could switch to different crops. Their soil is, of course, capable of growing other crops, and with worldwide markets and the continuing system of farm subsidies, the farmers can certainly find other worthwhile crops.

Example C (show different viewpoint)

One point that pro-smoking people offer is that taxes from the tobacco industry are a source of revenue for governments. This is true, indeed, given the size of the tobacco industry. It is also misleading, however, because the tobacco industry also receives considerable assistance from the American government—specifically, in direct subsidies, farmers received $1.7 billion, which nearly balances tax revenue from the tobacco industry. In other words, farmers paid $1.9 billion in taxes and received almost the same amount back. That’s not really revenue, just a revolving door.